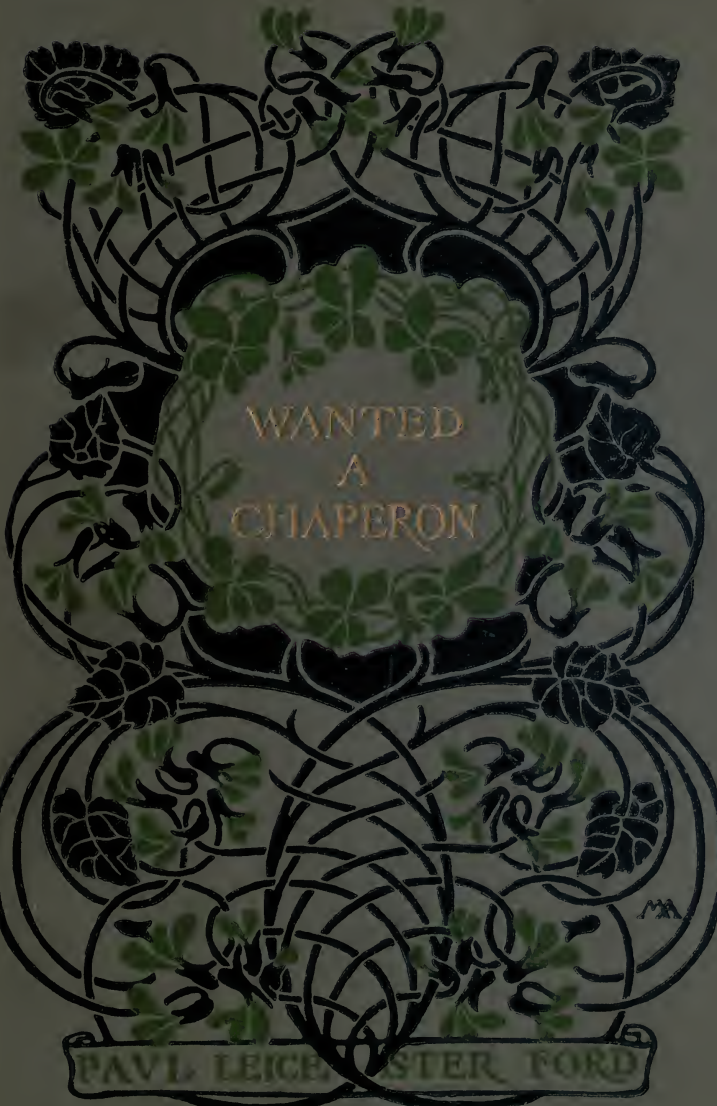
WANTED
A
CHAPERON
PAUL LEICESTER FORD

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Wanted—
A Chaperon

"Oh! must you, Auntie?" wailed Lydia.

—*Wanted—A Chaperon.*

Wanted—A Chaperon

By

PAUL LEICESTER FORD

With Six Illustrations in Colors
By HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY

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WANTED: A CHAPERON

OF all the millions who at one time or another have been compelled to burden their memories with any of the initials and figures used in naming the streets of New York, Lydia Greenough is probably the only mortal who thoroughly approves of the system. Question any one else as to its wherefore, and he or she, with either a moan or a curse (dependent, it is to be hoped, on the speaker's sex), would explain that, in a year now fading from

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the recollection of even its oldest inhabitants, a stupid surveyor and a foolish board of aldermen fastened upon the city of New York a method of street-numbering of surpassing inconvenience, which, with other moans and curses, its residents and its transients have since been forced to endure. But Lydia maintains that the system is admirable, and if the opportunity to plead its merits were but granted her, she would undoubtedly convince at least the masculine half of the metropolis that she is right, however wrong the system; which is merely one way of saying that Lydia is young and charming.

It was by the veriest chance — indeed, veriest of chances — that the much ma-

ligned method gained this powerful advocate. Lydia, if now asked, would doubtless assert and believe that it was all preordained, and never could have been otherwise. Yet, as a matter of fact, if on that Christmas eve a wild snowstorm had not been driving and drifting through the misnumbered streets, it never would have been. Or, if Mrs. Travers's maid had not taken to her bed with a quinsy sore throat, it never would have happened. Or, if the little country girl had been more used to city ways, and had stood less in awe of the liveried servants, it could not have occurred. In short, but for half a dozen contingencies, Miss Greenough would have completed her visit with her city relatives, and

returned home to settle once more peacefully into the life of her native New England village, with never a thought or even a dream of the destiny that might have been, and with not one word of defense for the system which henceforth commanded her warmest advocacy.

It must be acknowledged that Mrs. Travers's arrangements for that evening left a goodly chance for Dame Fortune to intervene, and she is a lady who seldom misses an opportunity, be it golden or otherwise.

"It 's snowing and blowing worse than ever," she announced, — not Dame Fortune, but Mrs. Travers, — sticking her head into the room where Lydia was dressing, "and it really seems to me I 'd

better telephone Mrs. Curtis that you can't come."

"Oh, must you, aunty?" wailed Lydia, her mouth drawn with disappointment.

"Do you truly want to go out in such fearful weather, child?" marveled Mrs. Travers, giving a little shiver, though the room was warm. "It's only a dinner, after all, and you'll surely catch a frightful cold, or worse."

"Why, aunty, if I were home, I'd probably be taking a sleigh-ride, or skating," eagerly asserted the girl, "and I never catch cold. I don't believe I even can. Oh, please, please let me go!"

"Well, if you really would rather, it's very much better, for there is hardly

anything worse than to fail a hostess, though I presume she'll have a lot of gaps, anyway, in such a storm." Mrs. Travers walked to the window, and pulling aside the thick curtain and the shade, looked out. "It's such a horrid night, and the snow's getting so deep, that I think I'll telephone Mrs. Curtis, after all, and — "

"Oh, aunty!" once more wailed Lydia.

"Wait, child, till I finish! Telephone her, asking if you may not spend the night. That will be much better for you, and it will save the horses from being kept waiting. I hate to have them out such a night, and if Winwood only had the common decency to keep well, I'd

have had a carriage from the livery-stable, rather than expose — "

"That will do just as well, aunty, really it will," interjected Lydia.

"My dear! Do you think I'd trust you with any one but our own coachman, since I can't send my maid with you?"

"I don't see why not."

"Gracious! my dear, how inexperienced you are!" sighed her aunt. "I must go and telephone first, but then I'll explain to you why it would n't be right or proper."

With this remark, Mrs. Travers departed, leaving her niece to worry over the extent of her ignorance of social conventions while she went on with her prinking.

This most important and fascinating employment was brought to a finish just as Mrs. Travers returned. "Yes, child, it's all right," was her announcement as she entered the room; "so put what you'll need for the night into a bag. It's too bad Winwood is n't here to do it for you. These modern servants!"

"She'd only be in my way," declared the girl, busy with the packing. "I'd much rather do it myself."

"And you look beautiful, my dear," said Mrs. Travers. "How can you do your hair so prettily without a maid?"

"But I have a maid, aunty," laughed Lydia, merrily, "and one, moreover, who takes much greater pains to make me look nice than any one else possibly

could. There! Do you think Winwood could have done that any quicker?" she ended, holding up the bag.

"Winwood! Why, Lydia, she simply breathes idleness. If you only knew how I am tried and — but there, I must n't begin on that, for it would take hours, and you must be starting, for it will take longer than usual to drive there because of the drifts, and then I don't want the horses to be kept waiting a moment longer than need be."

"What did you say was the number?" asked Lydia, hurriedly putting on her wrap.

"19 West Seventy — there, that 's what I 'm always doing! I say East when I mean West, and West when I

mean East. Mrs. Curtis lives at 19 East — no, no, child," she broke in, "don't you carry the bag; of course Morland must bring it down. Ring twice, as I have told you."

"I 'm sorry, aunty, but it 's so hard to get used to being waited on," apologized the girl, as she obeyed Mrs. Travers's instructions. "And it really takes more time; you know it does."

"But we must keep them busy, or they are simply ruined. Take Miss Greenough's bag to the carriage," she ordered, once the servant arrived, and then led the way downstairs.

"You did n't finish giving me Mrs. Curtis's address, aunty," Lydia reminded her, as they descended.

"

"Oh, yes. 19 East Seventy — now, did I say Seventy-second or Seventy-third when I read you her note this morning?"

"I am certain you said Seventy-second, because I remember thinking that four times eighteen is seventy-two, and so I only had to take my own age and multiply it by four."

"Yes, you are right, and I ought to have known it, for Mrs. Washburn lives at 19 West Seventy-third, so of course it must be Seventy-second. Well, kiss me good night, my dear. I hope the first dinner will be everything that you — why, how you are shaking, child!"

"It 's only excitement, aunty. Were n't you frightened and nervous and eager

and — oh — everything over your first dinner-party?"

Mrs. Travers smiled. "It's so long ago I've even forgotten, Lydia. But don't mention dinner-parties or any other parties to-night. There are dinners and dances and receptions in New York, but never parties. Every one will know you are from the country if you speak of parties."

"Oh, I'm so glad you told me, and I do hope I'll remember," exclaimed the girl, with an alarm in her voice suggestive of murder or arson rather than a fear of recognition of mere country breeding. "Is there anything else I should n't do?"

"Here's Morland to put you in the carriage, and the horses must n't be kept

waiting," answered her aunt. "Don't worry, my dear," she added in a whisper. A girl can do nothing amiss if she only — " Mrs. Travers artfully paused to kiss her niece twice, and then ended, " only is as pretty as you are."

Preceded by the footman, and well-nigh swept off her feet by the wind, Lydia went down the steps as quickly as possible, and entered the carriage. The servant, after placing the bag beside her, tucked the fur rug carefully about her feet, and then asked:

" Where to, Miss Greenough?"

"Oh, I forgot. Thank you, Morland. To — to 19 West Seventy-second, please."

The door slammed, and with an effort

that tested the goodness of the harness, the horses started on their toilsome drag through the drifts. Lydia, trembling half with the cold and half with excitement, tried to lean back, but the carriage rocked and jounced to such an extent as to make the position impossible, and so, sitting well forward and holding the arm-slings tightly, she steadied herself as best she could.

"Let me see," she cogitated, "I must not say 'Yes, sir,' or 'Yes, ma'am,' to any one, and I must n't thank the servants when they pass me things, but just say 'Yes,' or 'Not any,' and I must n't speak of parties, and — oh, dear! I'm sure aunty told me something else I was not to do! Oh, yes; I must always say 'a

friend,' or 'a man,' or 'a woman,' or 'a girl,' but never 'a lady friend' or 'a gentleman friend,' for that's the way shop-girls and servants talk."

With such thoughts and worries the girl sped the slow drive, or rather jolt, for such in truth it was. Twice the halting of the carriage made her think the destination was attained, but each time one glance out of the window served to show her that they were in the middle of the street, and the pause was merely to breathe the horses. At last, however, after a third halt and then a series of backings and advances, they brought up close to the curb, with a final jar that seemed to declare an intention of never again departing from that spot.

With a quickness born of both her own impatience and her aunt's fear for the horses, Lydia threw open the door and alighted. Although the wind had swept the sidewalk in front of the house fairly clean of snow, yet the suspicions of a more experienced diner-out would have been instantly awakened, for there was no man awaiting the carriages, no awning or even carpet, and, most telltale of all, the flight of steps was but a smooth slide of snow. But the country-bred girl gave not one thought to any one of these eloquent facts, and intent only on pleasing Mrs. Travers by not keeping the horses standing, she hurriedly closed the door, and said, "That 's all, thank you, Thomas."

"An' what time shall I call for yez, miss?" questioned the coachman, the words coming faintly through his thick fur collar.

"You are not to come for me, Thomas, for I'm to spend the night here with Mrs. Curtis."

As the carriage turned out into the middle of the street, Lydia crossed the sidewalk, and not without a struggle, for her gloves, fan, bag, and skirts took both her hands, slowly waded, more than climbed, the snow-laden steps.

No response came to her first ring, or to her second one, but her third proved an open sesame, for the door was swung back by a man-servant, who appeared

somewhat startled or surprised when Lydia stepped into the hall.

His face and manner made this so evident that it could not escape Lydia's observation; but before she could determine what it meant, she saw his eyes, which were wandering over her, fasten with real amazement on the bag in her hand.

"Mrs. Curtis knows that — my aunt telephoned Mrs. Curtis, asking if I might spend the night," she hurriedly explained.

The servant, who still held open the door, blinked at her. "Whodishyou-shay?" he asked, with a manner curiously mixing an attempt at dignity and an intense friendliness.

"My aunt, Mrs. Travers; and Mrs.

Curtis answered that I might," responded Lydia, vaguely anxious.

Still with dignity, somewhat lessened by an obvious leaning upon the handle, the man slowly closed the door. The difficult feat accomplished, he said, "Shidown," accompanying the recommendation with a sweeping motion of his arm toward the hall settle, which made him stagger. "Shidown, an' I'll ashk Misher Murshon."

"Who is he?" interrogated the girl, frightened into a direct question.

"Misher Murshon? Who'sh Misher Murshon?" echoed the man, so incredulously as to make Lydia fear she had committed some unpardonable social slip or was declaring her country origin.

Then he smiled — in fact, beamed — upon Lydia, as, answering his own question, he continued, "Misher Murshon 's finesh of men."

"I don't understand — there must be some mistake. Is n't this Mrs. Curtis's?"

"I shaid this Misher Murshon's."

"No, you did n't," denied Lydia, desperate with fright. "What number is it?"

"Number?" repeated the man, foggily, much as if the girl had propounded a conundrum.

"Yes. What number is this house?"

"Oh, yesh; number," he replied, once more smiling. "Thish 19 Wesh Sheventy-shecond."

"Oh," moaned Lydia, sinking back

on the settle, "and I told Thomas 19 East Seventy-second! And now I'll be late to the dinner, and aunty said there was nothing worse!" As this thought flashed into her mind, she sprang up, and catching at the handle of the door, threw it open, letting in a wild burst of wind, which brought with it a flurry of snow-flakes. "Oh, the carriage is gone!" she cried despairingly. "What am I to do?"

"Shidown, shidown," reiterated the servant. "Misher Murshon 'll know whatsh do. Ish all right." Turning, he walked along the hallway, steadying himself, as he went, by a hand on the wall, until he disappeared through a doorway.

Had Lydia been more versed in this world, she would have seized this oppor-

tunity to escape into the street, even though her foot gear consisted of slippers and worsted overshoes, and her gown and wraps were absolutely unfitted for the storm. As it was, she closed the door, and stood waiting the return of the man, with the courage of ignorance and of necessity.

The first development was not of a character to lessen her anxiety.

"What do you mean, Richards, by getting into this state?" demanded a gruff masculine voice, angrily.

No reply reached the ears straining so eagerly to hear, but one was evidently essayed, for, after a slight pause, the same voice continued:

"Nonsense! You are not in a fit

condition to do your duties, and you need n't try to hide it. You 've taken advantage of my helplessness, and my having to trust the keys to you."

Once more the angry voice ceased, and a moment's stillness ensued; then it began again:

"If you are not tipsy, why can't you tell me what it is you are trying to explain?"

The longest time of apparent silence followed, terminated finally by the same speaker, who, in a far louder but no less angry voice, called:

"Will who ever is out there please come in here?"

Lydia faltered and flushed and paled before she could screw her courage to

the acting-point; but some proceeding was necessary, and after an instant's hesitation she hurried along the hallway and passed through the door. It was a somber-looking room that she entered, unlighted save by a smoldering wood fire, and by a single oil-lamp, so shaded as to cast its rays only on a book in the hands of some one lying on a lounge.

"Zish ish zhe young laish, Misher Murshon," announced the servant, whose figure the girl could just make out in the gloom as she entered.

The recumbent person made a movement, as, in the now familiar accents, he said, "My fellow here has been drinking, and I can't make out from him what the matter is."

"I 'm — oh — I 'm so sorry to trouble you; it 's all a dreadful mistake, but Thomas brought me to the wrong house, and has gone away, and — and what am I to do?" Lydia's closing wail was dangerously near turning into tears, but the last word was uttered with only a break of the voice.

At the first sound of the girlish tone, the man reached up and turned aside the shade, so as to light up the room; and by the change the interloper found herself in the presence of a man of perhaps thirty-five, seemingly an invalid, for his face was pale and was resting on an ordinary bed-pillow, while a gray shawl was over his body.

"Well," he questioned, with a distinct

suggestion of impatience, "can't you walk there?"

"It's 19 East Seventy-second street, and it's storming terribly, and the carriage did n't stay, and I've only slippers on, and I'll spoil my dress, and I don't know the way," sobbed Lydia, giving way to tears as she catalogued her accumulation of difficulties.

"Now don't be silly and cry," protested the man, half gruffly and half frightened. "Sit down there, and we'll fix it all right."

"Oh, will you?" cried Lydia, gratefully, even through her tears. "Thank you, oh, thank you so much!"

"I suppose you're not too drunk, Richards, to run an errand," remarked the

master, bitingly. "I do think you might be trusted once without abusing my confidence."

"Misher Murshon, youshmosh unjush," responded the servant, in an injured tone. "When you shen me for champagne, acshident took plashe. Firsh bosshle broke, and while I shelecks anosher one, I breashe fumesh. Perfeshly shober, bush a lilly dizhey, zhash all."

"Then bring me that pad and a pencil from my desk," ordered the master, and when the two were in his hands, he wrote a brief note, and held it out to the servant, with the direction, "There, take that to Burton's livery-stable at once."

"Yesh, Misher Murshon; zish in-

shant," meekly answered Richards, as he hurried from the room with all the haste consistent with his efforts to walk steadily.

"Why don't you sit down?" questioned the host, curtly, once more motioning toward a chair.

"Had n't I better go back to the hall?" suggested Lydia. "Then I sha'n't interrupt your reading."

"Nonsense! Sit down!" he reiterated.

Afraid to object further, the girl took a chair, remarking, "Thank you very much; and please don't mind me, but go on with your book."

"I was reading only from sheer ennui," growled the man. "I sprained my ankle

last week, and have nearly perished of boredom ever since."

"I'm so sorry," said Lydia, with genuine sympathy in her words. "Does it hurt you much?"

"Only when I try to walk. But for that I'd have gone for a carriage myself," he had the grace to explain, softened a little apparently by her manner, "instead of sending that good-for-nothing beast."

"I'm very glad — that is, I mean — I should have been very sorry to have you put yourself out for me."

"I'm only afraid that fellow will take longer than need be," was the muttered explanation.

Absolute silence followed, the host evidently having nothing more to say,

and the guest being too timid to attempt conversation. But presently the heat of the room led her to open her fan, and this small act served to vivify it anew.

"If you're hot, why don't you take off your cloak?" he suggested. "At the best, the carriage can't get here under ten minutes."

"Thank you, I will, for I'm very warm," acceded Lydia, throwing back her wrap with real relief.

"You were on your way to some social frivolity," he remarked, more assertion than question, as his glance took in the dainty frock and the pretty bared arms and throat.

"Yes; to a dinner-party — there, I said it!" moaned Lydia.

"You never drank champagne before?" he nquired.

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"Said what?" questioned her interlocutor, surprised at her consternation.

"I — why, aunty told me," stammered the girl, blushing, "that if I spoke of dinner-parties, people — every one would know I was from the country."

"And are you from the country?"

"Yes," acknowledged Lydia, straightforwardly, though coloring a little.

"And why are you ashamed of that?"

"I 'm not ashamed of it," denied the girl, warmly.

"Then why did you object to people knowing that you were?" persisted her relentless interrogator, smiling.

It was a cruel question, and Lydia faltered an instant, but, collecting herself, she replied quietly, yet with real

dignity: "I feel no shame at living in the country, for it is nothing to be ashamed of; but when I am in the city, I wish to behave as it is customary, and so I was mortified at speaking of parties after my aunt had cautioned me not to use the word."

"Bravo! That's the way to feel, no matter what people say," exclaimed the man, approvingly. "Pray tell a social ignoramus why society objects to the word 'parties.'"

"I don't know; but aunty said that people only speak of dinners and dances and receptions, and never of parties, and that they'd think me countrified if I talked of them."

The man threw his head back and

laughed heartily. "Is n't that just like the collection of donkeys and geese and parrots who make up 'society'?" he said. "They do nothing but heehaw and quack and gabble about house-parties and coaching-parties and yachting-parties, but of course the word is low, vulgar, plebeian, and countrified when it is applied to the ordinary uses given in the dictionary. However, I'm grateful to you for enlightening me, for I'm not very experienced, and it would have been an awful mortification to me had I made a slip in such a vital matter as the latest edict concerning social slang."

"But aunty told me no well-mannered person ever used slang," objected his

listener, very much mystified by the irony.

"I 'm not much of an authority on the subject, but I think good manners and fashionable life have little intimacy. As for the latter's taboo on slang, it extends only to the vernacular of other circles, for its own lingo is as cheap and common as any it forbids."

"Not really!" marveled the girl, incredulously. "Now what, for instance?"

"Not being an expert, I can only reply at random; but take such words as 'bud,' 'belle,' 'wallflower,' 'smart,' 'swell,' and a lot of similar ruck, and you 'll see —"

The completion of the speech was cut short by the entrance, without any previous knock, of a very tall and stout

woman, who announced her advent with the demand:

"An' will yez be afther havin' yere dinner now, Misther Murchison, or wait till it 's spiled intoirely?"

The question asked, she stuck her arms, which were bared to the elbow, akimbo, and stared fixedly at Miss Greenough.

"Richards is n't back, is he?"

"Divil a bit."

"Then dinner must wait."

"All roight, sor; but don't be blamin' me, sure, if it 's burnt to a crisp," retorted the cook, impertinently.

"Oh, it 's too bad for me to spoil your dinner. Please don't let me prevent your having it," begged Lydia.

"That's roight, miss," agreed the cook, approvingly. "It's sick Oi am thryin' to cook for the loikes av him, that niver will ate his food whin it's ready. Toime an' toime ag'in he's so took up wid his chimicals or books —"

"That's enough, Monica," interrupted the master, sharply. "You may go back to the kitchen."

With a shake of her head and a muttered something of disapproval, the servant obeyed, just as the clock on the mantel began striking.

"You are witnessing some choice examples of a bachelor's housekeeping, are you not?" observed Mr. Murchison.

"I—I beg your pardon," apologized Lydia, with a start. "I was trying to

count the time, and so — what did you ask me?"

"It is just eight," he told her, after a look at his watch.

"Is it really?" sighed the girl, forlornly. "How long will it take to drive to East Seventy-second?"

"Usually about fifteen minutes, but it will be nearer half an hour if the snow is bad. What time was your dinner?"

"Half-past seven."

"Well, if the carriage comes within ten minutes, you'll only be a little more than fashionably late, so there's no occasion to look so funereal." Just as he finished, a bell sounded, and he added: "There's Richards now, and from the time he's

been, he ought to have brought a carriage with him."

Both listened so intently that they could hear the distant footsteps of the cook as she went to the basement door, and the creak and the slam as it was opened and closed, even the indistinct murmur of voices, succeeded after a time by the sound of footsteps coming up the stairs; and Monica appeared in the doorway.

"It 's Richards come back, sor," she announced; "an' he wint to two stables, an' they both said they 'd not sind no carriage out in this blizzard for no wan."

"And why does n't he come and tell me so himself?"

"Sure, an' I don't think he could git upstairs."

"He's been drinking again?"

"An' he has that same," acceded the servant. "Och, but the smell of the whisky 'most knocked me over whin I opened the door just now."

Something Mr. Murchison said under his breath as, tossing the shawl aside, he gingerly put his feet to the floor and sat up. Then aloud, "Hand me my crutches — there — in the corner," he directed, when the cook stood still.

"An' what do ye want wid thim?" she questioned, standing stolidly. "For ye need n't think I'll be afther bringin' thim to ye, if ye're goin' to do wan stip more than walk to the dinin'-room."

"Nonsense! Do as I tell you," ordered her master.

"Nary crutch do I bring, unless ye promise to moind the docthor."

"You will obey my order at once," he reiterated, quietly but sternly.

"Och, for the love of the blissid saints! Misther Murchison, be good now!" whimpered the woman, though she made not the slightest motion of obedience.

The invalid turned to his visitor. "Will you please bring me those crutches over there in the corner?"

"Don't ye do it, miss," counseled the Irish woman, "for he's that set an' obstinate that—"

"Be still, Monica," broke in the man, really irritated. "You don't—"

"An' is it be still ye'd have me?" indignantly retorted the maid. "Very well. Oi'll be still, an' let ye go yere own way, an' foine work 't will be." She crossed the room and came back with the crutches. "Theer!" she snapped, as she held them out to him, "thry walkin' the shtreets in this snow. Thry if ye can so much as git down the front stips in this wind. Listhen to it howl. Och, foine sport ye'll have of it!"

"Oh, she is quite right," urged Lydia, joining her plea to that of the servant. "It is blowing so that it is all one can do to stand up, and the steps are a foot deep with snow."

While she was speaking, the invalid took the crutches, and by their help suc-

cessfully struggled to his feet, and now stood upright, propped upon them. The joint protests, however, were sufficient to give him pause, and his face showed evident indecision for a brief space before he said, "Then will you go for a carriage, Monica?"

"Av coorse Oi will, if that will satisfy ye," assented the cook, "though Oi don't see what use 't will be if they won't send wan, an' the dinner 'ii be spoilt intoirely by the toime Oi git back, if Oi 'm not froze to death goin' or comin'."

"It 's dreadful to put you to so much trouble," grieved Lydia, "and now it— it — really is n't necessary. You said it would take over ten minutes to get a carriage here, and half an hour to drive

there, and now it's quarter past eight, so at the best I could n't get there till nearly nine o'clock, and the dinner will be over by that time. So please let Monica give you your dinner before she tries to get a carriage."

"That's roight, miss, an' the sinse ye have av it; for it's sure the policeman will be in for a bit av a sup—" Monica caught herself up sharply, coughed, and then went on hurriedly — "that is, it's me cousin promised he'd thry to bring me word this evenin' av how me — me niece was, that's sick wid a terrible cold; an' whin he comes, Oi'll just make him foind a carriage for ye, an' it's himself can do it."

"There, you see," joyfully cried the

country girl, her brow clearing. "That will save all the trouble."

"And what about you?" questioned Mr. Murchison.

"Me?" Why—I'll just sit here and read something until the carriage comes," explained Lydia, guilelessly.

"And go without any dinner?"

"Oh, that's nothing," she responded. "I'll not mind a bit, really."

"But I can't have that," objected the host. "Don't you see it's impossible?"

"Av coorse it is," chimed in Monica. "It's sit down an' have a good dinner along wid the masther ye will, sinsible loike."

"But I'm not in the least hungry, truly," lied Lydia, earnestly.

"It's impossible for me to have my dinner, and you go without," asserted Mr. Murchison. "Don't you see it is?"

Lydia colored and looked doubtingly, first at the woman and then at the man.

"I 'm afraid — it — would it be proper?" she questioned, her face once again wrinkled with anxiety.

"An' av coorse it would be, miss, an' a good dinner ye'll have; an' foine it will be for the masther to have a bit av company, afther his bein' so sick an' solitiry," affirmed the cook, heartily.

"I — I 'm not used to — to city ways," faltered Lydia, "and — oh, dear! I don't know what is right! What do you think

I ought to do?" she appealed to Mr. Murchison, throwing herself on his honor.

Her question transferred some of the wrinkles of her forehead to his and he hesitated, frowningly, before he spoke. "Look here," he replied, "I've got an apology to make, and I want to make it before I answer you. When you first came in here, I thought you were one of those silly New York society girls who pretend to be innocent and helpless, because they think that 's the way to catch the men, but who really know the world, good and bad, about as well as those twenty years their seniors. Believing this, I thought you could take care of yourself as well as need be, and so I was

curt and rude, and I'm sorry and mortified."

"Please don't talk like that," broke in the girl, "for you've — for I know how much trouble I've given you all, and you've been most kind."

"I say this much as a preliminary because I wanted you to feel in advance that you were n't being asked to dine by an ogre. If, now, you were one of the girls I mistook you for, I suppose you would n't dine with me under the present conditions. That's because they import their manners, as well as their gowns, from France, and Johnnie Crapeau is such a gentleman that convention ordains that a woman must never be left alone with him an instant. But, as a

fact, the American woman knows that she's absolutely safe with the American man, and she does n't pay the least heed to the decree, except this society woman, who would n't either, if it were n't French. Is n't that so?"

"I—I don't quite know what you mean," she replied.

"Where you came from was it wrong for a girl to go off driving or sleighing with a man, and to be alone with him for several hours?"

"No," acknowledged Lydia, a little reluctantly.

"Then I don't see why you should n't dine with me."

"But I knew them well—and always had known them," she objected.

The man smiled as he said pleasantly: "And I have n't even a family Bible to vouch for me. Well, my name is Allan Murchison, which is equivalent to saying that I was born a Scotchman, and the Standard Chemical Company would give me a first-class recommendation, if they thought I needed it, either as a man or as a chemist. Monica here will go bail for my conduct as a domestic animal, which" — Mr. Murchison gave a little laugh — "is more than I can do for either of my domestics. Now, don't you think this information and her presence are guaranties enough?"

"An' sure, miss," interrupted the cook, once again putting in her tongue, "don't ye fear wan minute to do it, for the

masther 's a gintleman, if ever theer was wan, or it 's not mesilf would desave ye if he was n't."

Poor Lydia glanced about the room, as if seeking further counsel from something before saying, "I 'm afraid I 'm very foolish, but I really don't think I ought. It — it somehow does n't seem right — and something tells me that aunty would think it very wrong."

"Then of course you are not to do it," Mr. Murchison told her, and taking the crutches from under his arms, he resumed his seat on the lounge.

"Oh, but won't you please have your dinner, just as if I was n't here?" besought the girl. "I 'll just sit here and read something."

To prove the good faith of her offer, she caught up a magazine from the little table.

Mr. Murchison laughed with real merriment. "Hold on," he said; "I'll have a forfeit with you. If you'll promise honestly to read that, — that is understand it, — why, I'll eat my dinner alone; but if you don't read it, as you said you would, why, then you must dine with me. Is it a bargain?"

"Why, yes. I'll agree to that," consented Lydia, welcoming any loophole of escape, though a little puzzled to know what he meant.

"Now light the reading-lamp and see what you've promised to read," requested the man, laughing once more.

Obediently the girl turned on the electric light on the table beside her, and, raising the magazine, glanced at the title. "'Chemisch-Technisches Repertorium,'" she read out questioningly, with an admirable German accent.

"Oh," ejaculated the man, his laughter visibly waning, "you know German, do you? Well, which of the articles are you going to read?" he questioned quizzically.

Miss Greenough ran her eyes down the table of contents, and then she smiled, as she answered, with a touch of archness, "I think this 'Darstellung von substantiven Baumwollfarbstoffen aus Derivaten der Dinitrooxydipheny-

lamine,' by a man named Allan Murchison, sounds interesting."

"And are you going to try to make me believe you can understand that rubbish," demanded Mr. Murchison, the smile all gone, "and so escape paying the forfeit?"

Lydia gave a triumphant little laugh. "My father is a doctor, Mr. Murchison, and he's taught me all the chemistry he knows, and I'm very much interested in it; indeed, I could n't have found anything that interests me more. So you see you must pay the forfeit, and eat your dinner, while I sit here and read."

"Oh!" was all the response the chemist vouchsafed, thoroughly taken aback and crestfallen. Then, man of his

word, he turned to Monica. "You may give me dinner as soon as it is ready."

"Ready," grunted the cook as she started to leave the room. "Ready some of it's been this twinty minutes, an' it's not mesilf is to blame if—" There her grumbles died away out of the hearing of the two.

To emphasize the agreement, Lydia slightly shifted her chair to bring the light properly, and, opening the review, began reading.

To this absorption Mr. Murchison made no objection, but, settling back on the lounge, he calmly examined his unexpected visitor, who, thanks to the newly lighted lamp, was now for the first time clearly visible to him. In her dainty

frock, the gift of her aunt, and far exceeding in fineness anything she had hitherto even dreamed of, the girl made a charming picture; but Mr. Murchison scarcely noticed it, giving his whole attention to her face. It was one most people gave attention to, with its clear eyes, studious rather than alert, and its rather low and thoughtful forehead, all suggesting in some way that they were more interested in what was being thought than in what was being seen, and each in curious contradiction to, or at least strange mates of, a very youthful-looking mouth and chin, and a wilderness of little curls, boldly standing forth or timidly hiding themselves, flyaway or nestling, single and in couples, decking

the temples, or kissing the little ears and the slender neck, and all seemingly uttering a mute but most eloquent protest at the tyranny of combs and hair-pins. The spectacle was a novel one to the solitary bachelor, and was made all the more unusual and interesting because those eyes were reading an article of his, and he noted each change of expression, however slight, and tried to divine from it how far she had progressed and how much she was interested.

It is not to be supposed that Miss Greenough could long remain unaware of this fixed scrutiny, and as consciousness grew she found it more and more difficult to keep her attention fastened upon what she was reading, and to

keep from stealing a glance toward the sofa to assure herself that she was being watched. This latter desire presently became so strong that only by a distinct exertion of the will was she able to resist it, and, try her best, her thoughts would not keep themselves centred in those strange German letters and terrible technical words. She held her eyes determinedly on the text, however, and turned the pages at what she thought was the proper interval of time.

"Now, honestly, do you understand it?" questioned her host suddenly.

Although the interruption was a relief in that it allowed the girl to raise her eyes, the inquiry was disconcerting, and the temptation to fib was strong; but

after a moment's embarrassment Lydia answered frankly:

"I have n't been able to comprehend it."

"Then under our compact you will have to dine with me, won't you?" broke in Mr. Murchison.

"I was going to explain," went on the girl, "that my mind won't concentrate on it at present; but I believe, if the conditions were different, I could read it, abstruse as it is. And when I am home again I shall write and get a copy, that I may really read it."

"You need n't take that trouble, for you are welcome to that copy, if you are in earnest."

"But I really must n't rob you."

The author laughed. "You need n't fear that. One is n't paid anything for that kind of stuff, but they give one all the copies one wants. Anything to get rid of them, is the way they look at it, judging from the difficulty I have in getting people to accept copies."

"If you are in earnest, of course I'll take it gladly, and be very much obliged indeed; and I know papa will be glad to see it, too, for he—"

The thanks of the girl were cut short here by the intermittent cook, who once more entered.

"An' whativer shall we do, sor?" she demanded crossly. "Here's that baste Richards lyin' on the intry flure, an' not wan move can Oi git 'm to make, an'

now Oi foind he has n't aven set the ta-able."

The man on the sofa laughed, half amusedly and half disgustedly. "It 's lucky for me that you did n't accept my invitation. The Fates are determined, you see, that we are neither of us to have any dinner."

"An' sure it 's not as bad as that," comforted the servant, "for it 's mesilf will set the ta-able in the dinin'-room for ye, or this little wan in here, just as ye desoide, Misther Murchison."

"Very well; give it to me here."

"An' perhaps ye 'll be clearin' off that ta-able, miss, whoile Oi 'm afther gittin' the plates," calmly suggested the maid.

"I won't have such impertinence,

"Oh, Amelia," cried the girl, springing to her feet.

—*Wanted—A Chaperon.*

Monica," began the master angrily, "and —"

"But I will gladly," acquiesced Lydia, rising.

"Nonsense! I 'll not have you do anything of the kind," indignantly asserted the man.

"And how will you prevent me?" laughed Lydia, saucily, busy in clearing away the books and other things on the table.

"I won't have you wait on me, or do my servant's bidding," he protested.

"Why, I often set the table at home," explained the girl, "and I really enjoy it, for I make it look so much nicer than Hannah ever does that even papa notices the difference. And I always do it when

we are to have company. Shall I put the table by the sofa or by the easy-chair?"

"By the chair, please," requested Mr. Murchison, resignedly though amused. "But pray don't let my wishes interfere with any preference you may have. I'm well used to the position of submissive mastership."

"In that case I'm going to move them both over here, nearer the fire — or what might be one if it were properly mended," announced the girl, really interested and on her mettle. She put the furniture as indicated, and then with the tongs changed the positions of the smoldering, smoking logs, placed two new ones artfully in exactly the right

spots, and brushed up the hearth into tidiness, just as the fire burst out into flames that lighted up and cheered the hitherto rather gloomy-looking room.

"That's delightful!" exclaimed Mr. Murchison, admiringly. "I wish you'd show my servants how to make a fire; for all they ever give is just an aggravation of one."

"It's only a bed of embers, a good big back log, and plenty of air — oh, I forgot I was instructing a chemist — plenty of O_2. I always like to think of fire as the ancients did, before you dreadful scientists took all the poetry out of it, as a god, or element, separate from but imprisoned in everything. Many and many a night I can't go to sleep until my fire is

all burned out, but just lie and watch the flame or spirit escape from its prison. And if I were a poet, my first endeavor would be to try to write some great epic on it, and so put the poetry back."

"And why so unjustly leave out the scientist?" responded Mr. Murchison. "Surely he or his works could be included. Let me see if I can't suggest a stanza or two. Yes:

> "'The Baltimore heater
> Makes many lives sweeter.'"

"Oh, don't!" pleaded Lydia.

"Ah, ha! So you must beg of the poor scientists, after all? But after your base attack on them I'll show no mercy. Listen to this:

"'How dreary, cold, and strange
Is the home without a—'"

Crash! jingle! jingle! jingle! came a succession of sounds, cutting short the rhymester.

"Don't be alarmed," hastily said Mr. Murchison, reassuringly, as Lydia jumped. "That is merely the usual announcement that a bachelor's dinner is approaching, though I do think Monica might have let me complete my jingle before so utterly eclipsing it with hers."

"It is too bad!" cried Lydia, regretfully.

"Which?—for I'm afraid my doggerel is the worse of the two. Well, Monica, is there enough left for one meal?" he asked, as the cook appeared, her

arms laiden with napery, china, and silver.

"Arrah, Misther Murchison, an' it was just two plates an' some silver which fell off the dresser av thimselves while Oi was r'achin' for the glasses, an' it froighted me so, bad cess to it! that Oi dhropped two goblets, an' small blame to me that Oi did n't dhrop more." She set her burden on the table with an air of conscious self-approval, and as she retired said: "Theer, miss, whoile ye spread the cloth, Oi 'll be bringin' in the rest."

"You are now paying the penalty of having sided with Monica against me a moment ago, for she clearly considers you as an ally, if not a minion. But it 's

your own fault if you pay the least attention to her bidding."

"It really amuses me," answered the girl, gaily, as she deftly unfolded and settled the cloth into place, and arranged silver and china quickly and quietly in their positions.

"You 'd better set two places while you are about it," advised the man, "for I see Monica has brought the china and silver for it, so she evidently intends that you shall dine with me."

"An' av coorse she will, an' not be foolish," asserted the cook, reëntering with goblets and wine-glasses. "Sure, don't be stiff and silly, miss, but do as the masther bids ye."

With slightly heightened color, and

with hands not quite so quick and dexterous as before, Lydia set another place opposite the one completed, while the maid deposited the glass upon the table.

"Oi think that 's all to begin wid," she said, taking stock of the table.

"Can't you — have n't you something to ornament it with — a centrepiece — flowers — silver?" asked Lydia. "It looks so bare."

"I 'm afraid you are asking too much of a bachelor's house. How is it, Monica?"

"Nary a cinterpace have we; but theer 's a silver moog might do."

"Never mind; this will answer," said Lydia, taking a small vase from the mantel and putting it on the table. This

done she took from the front of her gown a bunch of violets. "There, could Richards have done that better?" she asked, giving her hands a little clap of triumph.

By the aid of the crutches the invalid had once again got upon his feet, and then across the space to the table. "That is charming," he declared, "and I only wish Richards had half your skill. If ever a Good Samaritan deserved a dinner, I think you do."

"An' shall I dish up, sor?" inquired the cook.

"You will take your orders from Miss — excuse me, but I really think I ought to know your name."

"Lydia Greenough."

"Thank you. This is Miss Greenough's dinner, Monica, and you will take your orders from her."

"Then you may serve dinner," directed Lydia; and as the cook departed and the two took their seats at the little table she went on naïvely: "Do you know, I've always had such a longing to be the mistress of a house, if only for a week, and so you can't imagine what fun this is to me."

"I should think a week would be enough to cure you of the desire, and I suspect one meal at this house will."

"On the contrary," replied Lydia, smiling, "what I have seen has had the directly opposite effect."

"I don't see why."

"Because there is such a lot to do," laughed Lydia. "I'm afraid that is very rude under the circumstances," she added, with a shade of contrition, "but there are five of us girls, besides mama, and it's a tiny house, so there is never enough work to go round; and if there's anything particularly nice, such as buying something new, or rearranging a room, or making jelly, why, it is n't fair for me to have it, because I'm the youngest. You know, sometimes I'm fairly desperate, I seem to be of so little use."

"Except when you set the table," suggested Mr. Murchison, smiling.

"Yes; and papa lets me keep his dispensary in order."

"Oh, so that's how you came to study chemistry, is it?"

"Yes; and then I hope to use it later on."

"And how will you do that?" asked her vis-à-vis, smiling indulgently.

"I want to get a position as teacher in a school, and I thought that the more things I knew the better my chance would be."

The dialogue was broken here by the arrival of Monica, bearing in each hand a plate of soup, which she duly placed before the two, and both, really hungry, began upon it, only to discover, with the first sip, that its temperature was as far from suggesting the fire as it was the refrigerato..

"Really, Monica," protested the host, "I think you might give us our soup warm enough to be eatable."

"An' wid nary a hot plate, an' me carryin' it from the kitchen clear up here," retorted the maid indignantly. "Sick Oi am thryin' to plase yez, an' Oi gives notice now that Oi—"

"It's very nicely flavored and not a bit greasy," put in Lydia, soothingly; "and I don't wonder it isn't quite hot enough, considering all the circumstances."

"Thank ye kindly, miss," replied the cook, softening a little at the praise, "an' it's yeself knows how it is wid a poor, lone woman workin' herself to skin an' bones," — Monica weighed two

hundred if she weighed a pound — "thryin' to suit a lot of ungrateful, complainin' men, as nothin' will satisfy but —"

"You might get us some bread, now, and also the champagne, Monica," interjected Mr. Murchison, mildly.

"Nary step more —" began the servant.

"Oh yes, Monica," broke in Lydia, persuasively; "can't you get us some bread?"

"An' if Oi do, 't will be for ye, an' not thim as spends their toime complainin'," muttered the servant, still belligerent; but she departed on the suggested errand.

"It is lucky for me that I told Monica

this was your dinner, for I fear that otherwise we should go hungry. I wish you 'd tell me how you do it."

"Oh, servants are easy enough," replied Lydia, speaking as if she were used to a houseful of them. "You only want to remember that they are children," she explained, "and that they 'll do anything for you if they are fond of you, and nothing if they are n't. It 's a quality I admire in them; it 's so honest."

"Evidently you are a born housekeeper."

"Yes, I believe I am," acknowledged the girl simply; "for I love everything about a house, and my dream has always been to have one of my own to take care of and fuss over, and where everything

would be just as I wanted it. I can't imagine anything more interesting."

Mr. Murchison smiled at Lydia's enthusiasm. "It's a pity we can't exchange places, for I have the house and never give it the least attention. Now, honestly, do you think my lot enviable?"

Lydia shook her head as she glanced about the room. "You couldn't have arranged things worse," she said, "and I don't see how you can stand it. Do you know," she went on, dropping her voice to a confidential pitch, "that ever since I lighted the lamp I've been trying not to look at the mantel; yet I can't keep my eyes away from it."

"Mantel? What's the matter with the mantel?"

"Why, the magenta lambrequin and that beautiful Pompeian red bowl."

"It is a beauty, is n't it?" responded the owner. "I bought it in Naples of —"

"But, oh, would you mind if I moved it somewhere else?" begged Lydia.

"Do anything you want with it, if the sight of it troubles you."

"I only want to get it away from that particular color," explained Lydia, rising and shifting the object of conversation to the top of a book-shelf. "There, that's such a relief, is n't it?"

"I suppose it is, since you say so," acknowledged the man. "You see — well, this is only a rented house, and most of the furniture is n't mine, and I

spend virtually all my time at the factory or in my laboratory up-stairs, so it didn't seem worth while to do much."

"But magenta and red!" sighed Lydia, with a slight shiver.

"Probably it's wrong, and if I paid more attention to the house no doubt it would go better, for I confess everything just messes along, and I'm a fool to tolerate it. But I'm a busy man, and I hate all the little details like poison, and so I even put up with bad servants rather than go through the trouble of —" There the householder checked himself as Monica entered, bearing a plate of bread and a champagne-cooler.

"I was looking forward to a lonely

and very dull Christmas Eve," said Mr. Murchison, as he took the bottle from its icy repository and began twisting the cork, "and so I thought I'd try and make it a little festive by this — with rather disastrous results, as you have seen. It was an unlucky chance for you, but I hope a glass of it will lessen your disappointment over the 'dinner-party' a little." As he talked, the cork came out with a clear *pop*, and he poured a few drops into his own glass.

"Do you know, I've never tasted champagne, and I've been very curious to know what it's like. It was one of the things I was looking forward to at the dinner."

Mr. Murchison had begun to fill

Lydia's glass, but he halted. "You've never drunk champagne before?" he inquired.

"No. I suppose it's very countrified, but I never have."

"Then I'm going to advise you not to make a beginning this evening," he counseled.

"Of course I won't, if you think best," acceded the girl.

"It sounds rather inhospitable, the more so that I can't give any reason why I advise it; but — probably you'll understand me when I put it in the feminine form and say that it's a feeling and not a reason," explained the host, as he put the bottle back in the cooler without even filling up his own glass.

"But that need n't prevent your having some," said Lydia.

"Thank you, but the 'feeling' includes me as well; so you see that it is at least impartial. The fact is, if I had stopped to think, I'd never have told Monica to bring it."

"But it makes me feel bad to think that you are depriving yourself," said Lydia; "and it does n't keep, does it?"

"Not over-well," answered Mr. Murchison, biting his lip.

"Then please don't waste it on my account," she urged.

"It can't be said to have been wasted, because it has indirectly saved me from a very solitary dinner, and has given me my cheer in a pleasanter form. That 's

rather a selfish way of speaking, I suppose, but I 'm not going to pretend that your loss has n't been my gain."

"It 's very kind of you to say such nice things," responded the girl, brightening, "and I only hope you really mean them, and are not merely trying to make me feel comfortable."

"I should imagine that my earlier treatment would have convinced you that, whatever else, I am not in the habit of letting my feelings and my words differ. Well, Monica," he went on, as the maid reappeared, "what further delicacy have you for us?"

"This is a chicken-poy, sor, an' this peraties," she catalogued, as she banged them, one by one, on the table. Then

she caught up the soup-plates, and with an "Oi'll be bringin' ye war-rm plates an' some cor-rn in wan minute," she retired.

It must be confessed that the pie-crust was dried to a state of hardness that made its cutting difficult, and its eating still more so, but the diners were too hungry to be critical, and Lydia brought smiles into the servant's face by warmly praising each dish.

"'T 'is yesilf knows what 's what," said Monica, reciprocating the praise.

"I don't know what you 've done to my cook," remarked Mr. Murchison in one of her absences; "I 've never seen her so good-tempered and willing."

"One can do so much more in this

world by praise than by criticism, and it 's so much better for one's own nature, as well as comfort," remarked the sage of eighteen.

"I wish you 'd tell me why, since you are so fond of housekeeping and are so well fitted for it, you prefer to be a teacher," inquired her host.

"I don't prefer," replied the girl, frankly, "but I think it right. Our village is so small that there is very little practice, and there are such a lot of us that I made up my mind I ought to try to support myself."

"And have you ever taught?"

"No. The school committee would have given me the sixth district school this autumn, but papa thought I was too

young, and made me wait till next spring Of course I hope to get a better place some day, where I can teach interesting things; but it 's awfully nice to begin that way, because it 's only four miles from Millersville, and so I can live at home."

"I wonder if you 'll mind telling me what your pay will be?"

"Twenty dollars a month. Is n't it splendid?"

"And for that you walk eight miles every day, as well as teach?"

"Of course; for eight miles is nothing, and in good weather I 'll go on the bicycle — that is, whenever one of my sisters does n't want to use it. And if it rains or snows very badly, I 've agreed on a

price with Mrs. Springer, who lives very near the school, so that I may stay with her whenever—why do you look like that?" she broke in.

"Like what?"

"Why—I don't know exactly—but you were—well, if it had been in a car, I should term it staring."

"Yes, I suppose I was," acknowledged Mr. Murchison, "and I beg your pardon. The truth is, I was making a discovery. Indeed, I might say I was making two."

"And what were they?"

"The first one was that I'm a fool; which resulted from my second one, that for years I have been thinking that a certain variety of the *genus homo* was extinct, merely because it was not to be

met with in the city, while all the time it was flourishing in its natural habitat."

"I'm afraid I don't understand you."

Whether Mr. Murchison would have explained was not to be known, for a second time the down-stairs bell jangled, and both became listeners, eager to know what it might foretoken. Their ears were first greeted, once the bell had been answered, by the murmur of voices, and then, as before, by the sound of footsteps on the stairs, but this time far more ponderous ones.

"That sounds like Monica's alleged cousin," remarked the host, and his surmise was quickly verified, for, preceded by the cook, there presently appeared a burly policeman, hat in hand, both that

and his shoulders well covered with snow.

"Good avenin' to ye," he said, with a pleasant smile at the two diners, "an Mrs. Mooney was tellin' me that ye were afther wantin' a kerridge."

"Yes; and if you can get us one, I'll be very much obliged."

"Oi don't know as Oi can, for 't is a bad noigt, but Oi 'll do me best; an' aven if they won't sind out no cab, 't is loikely they won't moind sindin' a sleigh."

"It was foolish of me not to think of that," exclaimed Mr. Murchison, "though," he went on, checking himself, "I'm afraid you are hardly garbed for that."

"Yes, I am," asserted Lydia. "My

cloak is as warm as warm can be, and I never take cold. Anything they 'll send will do, really."

"An' wheer do ye want it to go to?" questioned the roundsman.

"To 4 West Fifty-sixth," spoke up Lydia.

"Sure, 'tis not loikely they 'll moind such a little trip," said the officer.

"Tell them I 'll pay extra for it," directed Mr. Murchison; "and there 'll be something for you, if you can help us."

"Thank ye, sir; but that's not needed," replied the man, turning to go.

"We 'll settle that later on. Come back, anyway, for something to eat

and a glass of champagne," continued Mr. Murchison, pleasantly. "And, by the by, how is Monica's niece?" he inquired, smiling.

"Phwat niece?" asked the putative relative.

"Sure, whose niece should it be," broke in Monica, "but Mary, as ye promised to bring me word av this very avenin'? Is her cold betther?"

"Ah, go 'long wid yere jokin'," retorted the man. "Oi don't know what ye're pokin' at me, but Oi don't bite on no rubber sandwich, not me."

"Go 'long wid yeself," snapped the cook, crossly. "Go git the carriage, an' don't shtand wastin' toime here."

Suiting her action to her advice, she

caught him by the arm and half shoved, half led him through the doorway.

"Oh, do you think he can get it?" asked Lydia.

"For a certainty; so put yourself quite at your ease."

"That 's such a relief," sighed the girl.

"It is to me as well, for I was worrying over what we should do, having little hope that Monica would succeed any better than Richards."

As if the uttering of the name had exorcised some spell, the butler entered, or rather sneaked into, the room, a spectacle indeed, for from his head, which was a mop of wet, bedraggled hair, were dripping little streams of water, which

ran down an already well-soaked coat and shirt-front.

"I beg pardon, sir, about dinner," he said, still with a thick utterance and blinking confusedly, "but I wash taken bad and—"

"What have you been doing to get so wet?" demanded the master.

"Yes, sir — I — it — I wash taken faint, sir, an' — an' when I recovershed, the offish — the offish —" the man abandoned the difficult word — "the poleesh — the poleesh —" again he gave up the attempt — "a friend wash holdin' my head under the fashet, an' then I remembered about dinner."

"Well, we don't want you," said Mr. Murchison, sternly, "and you will go to

your room at once, and not show yourself again to-night. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," meekly answered the servant, only too glad to hasten from the room.

Barely had he disappeared when a bell clanged, this time not the familiar jingle of the basement door, but the sharp, clear note of a gong, and the next instant the sound of the opening of the front door was heard. This was succeeded by a murmur of voices, and then by a rustle of a woman's skirts, and suddenly Mrs. Travers came to a halt in the doorway.

"Lydia!" was all she said, but the tone and the horrified look in her face told the rest.

"Oh, aunty," cried the girl, springing to her feet, "I'm so glad! How good of you to come! But how did you know?"

"Put on your cloak at once and come with me," directed her aunt, sharply.

"Oh, aunty, won't you please let me tell you how it all happened, and introduce—"

"Not a word, Lydia; but do as I tell you," ordered Mrs. Travers.

With some difficulty, for the crutches were out of reach, Mr. Murchison rose to his feet, and said:

"I trust you will let me explain how little Miss Greenough is in fault in what I can see you both misjudge and blame."

"My niece, sir, can tell me all I wish

to know," she replied as icily as could be, "and I do not choose to stay here an instant longer than we must. Come, Lydia," she said to the girl, who had hastily thrown on her wrap, as she moved away from the door.

"Yes, aunty," came a frightened acquiescence. Then she held out to her host a hand that trembled. "Thank you, thank you, oh, so much, for being so kind to me, and please don't think—"

"Lydia," called her aunt impatiently from the hall; and leaving her sentence unfinished, the girl added an "Oh, forgive my not saying all I want to!" even as she ran after her aunt.

Finally getting to his crutches, Mr. Murchison hobbled to the door, just in

time to see the butler close the front one. "Did you answer the bell just now, Richards?" he asked quietly.

"Yes, sir; I wash jush goin' upshtairs when I hearsh it."

"And what did the lady say?"

"She ashks for young lady, sir, an' I tells her she dinin' wish you in back room, an' then she hurrish down hall wishout ashking permission."

"Very well. Go to bed."

The order given, Mr. Murchison limped back to the center of the room, and stood there leaning on his crutches. The fire had died down, the unfinished meal was on the table, the chairs were askew, on the lounge was the shawl in an untidy heap; everything seemed dis-

ordered and uncomfortable. Yet only a moment before it had all seemed pleasant and cheery. He slowly looked about, and the wall-paper, the carpet, the furniture, even the colors, grated upon him, though never before had he so much as noticed any of them.

"Allan Murchison," he said aloud, "you are a fool."

Having eased his mind, he did a like service to his body, by a shrug of the shoulders; then he stumped to the table, took up the little vase of violets, and raised them to his face, but whether to nose or lips was not clear,

"And having discovered it, it's your own fault if you remain one," he ended.

AND Lydia?

She had followed after her aunt, pausing only to snatch up her bag, and with it she staggered down the steps, regardless of dress or safety.

"Get in before me!" she was ordered, and then the one word, "Home," was called to the coachman as her aunt entered the carriage and banged the door.

"Oh, aunty, please, please don't speak to me so!" begged the girl. "Do let me explain how—"

"Explain!" cried Mrs. Travers. "Explain your drinking champagne with a strange man in a strange house!"

"I did n't touch a drop," protested the girl, "and neither—"

"Lydia, Lydia! It's all too terrible! And to think what would have happened if Mrs. Curtis had not telephoned me, asking me where you were! That such a horrible thing should—"

"Oh, there was nothing wrong! It was a dreadful mistake, my getting to the wrong house, but—"

"And that you should stay there a minute in such a place—why, that dreadful-looking, drunken brute at the door should have prevented you from even entering it. And then your actually sitting down to dinner with a man—"

"But I did n't, aunty, until I had found he was a gentleman."

"Gentleman! That creature in a

smoking-jacket, who takes such advantage of a young, ignorant, and silly girl! Gentleman, indeed!"

"He is, really he is, aunty, as you'd know if you'd only let me tell you all about it. And you must have seen what a fine face he had."

"With his hair all rumpled and in disorder."

"That was because he had been lying down and—"

"Hush, child! Not another word, for you only make it worse. Nobody knows, for Thomas of course thinks he brought you to the right house, and I'll manage some explanation to Mrs. Curtis; but, oh, what can I say to your father and mother?"

"I will tell them all about it, aunty, and they will not blame either of us," said Lydia, with quiet dignity.

"Child, child, how can you be so blind! Don't you see what a dreadful thing it has been? No, no! I don't want to hear anything about it. The harm's done, and it can't be bettered by anything that can be said."

And so her aunt talked until Lydia, ceasing her attempts to justify herself, broke down, and, her beautiful dress forgotten, sobbed and sobbed until the house was reached. There, at the command of her monitor, she hastily dried her eyes, and with the hood of her cloak held about her face to hide the tear-stains from the footman, she fled past

him, and up-stairs to her room. Longing only for a chance really to vent her grief, she closed and locked the door, and then threw herself upon the bed and wept and wept.

THE breakfast-hour at the Traverses', Christmas morning, was at nine o'clock, and Lydia brought to it a very pale face and very red eyes, and she showed such listlessness and want of appetite that Mr. Travers, who at first was wholly absorbed in narrating how the snow had impeded his getting up-town to such an extent that he was held in an elevated train over four hours and did not reach home till after eleven, finally forgot his own troubles long enough to comment upon her.

"Your first dinner seems to have done you up pretty badly, little girl," he said. "Ah, country folk can't stand up to the racket that the city ones do. However, cheer up, for I've a nice present for you in the library. And here's another, I'll be bound," he added, as Morland appeared and handed her a package.

"He's to wait for an answer," the servant announced.

Slowly Lydia unknotted the string and opened it. Within were two letters, and — she flushed suddenly as, lifting them, she found underneath, the familiar "Chemisch-Technisches Repertorium."

"Hello!" exclaimed her uncle. "What's all this blushing about? Let's see your printed valentine, Lydia."

Without a word the girl handed him the magazine, and then looked at her two letters. One was without any inscription on the envelope; the second was addressed to her. Breaking it open she read as follows:

Christmas morning.

DEAR MISS GREENOUGH: — I fear that unintentionally I have been the cause of your being blamed, and as I deserve any that is deserved, I have written in the enclosed envelop a full explanation of the circumstances, which should save you, at least, from all criticism. Will you kindly hand it to your aunt, with an apology for the fact that, not knowing her name, I cannot properly direct it?

I also send you the magazine, in the hope that your leaving it behind was due to the suddenness of your departure, and not to a desire of escaping from it.

My doctor has been to see me this morning, and I told him that I would consent to be a "lounger" no longer. My insistence has led him to put the ankle in a plaster jacket, and I can now get about with one crutch better than I could yesterday with two, and so I write this to ask permission to call upon you this afternoon, partly that I may justify our conduct to your aunt, and partly in the hope that I may renew an acquaintance I should like to continue and strengthen.

Sincerely yours,

ALLAN MURCHISON.

"Well, I can't say much for your Christmas present, Lydia," laughed Mr. Travers. "Who sent it to you?"

"It is from Mr. Murchison," replied the girl quietly. Then she turned to her aunt. "Here is a letter from him which he asks me to give to you, and this is his letter to me. Will you

please tell me what answer I ought to make?"

"Not the Murchison who writes this article?" queried her uncle.

"Yes."

"Pray how did you come to know Allan Murchison?"

"I met him last night," said Lydia, slightly shivering.

"And he sends you a letter and a magazine before ten this morning! Good. You evidently made a conquest at your first dinner, little girl, and a good one at that. I'm sure you liked him."

"Do you know anything about him, Charles?" demanded Mrs. Travers, looking up with surprise.

"Well, rather! He's the consulting

chemist of the Standard Chemical Company, and sometimes he 's called into our board meetings."

"Indeed!" said the wife, showing more interest. "And — and what kind of position is that?"

"Oh, a very responsible and important one."

"No. I mean, is it well paid?"

Mr. Travers laughed.

"We pay him thirty thousand a year, which our president says is n't enough, and I 've heard that he earns as much more out of the royalties for some discoveries he 's made. I know he 's one of our large stockholders, and that does n't tend to poverty."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Travers,

with a most eloquent intonation. She looked at the pale girl, and seemed to hunt for something adequate to say; not finding it, she settled back in her chair, and very deliberately read, first the letter to Lydia, and then the one to herself. Evidently they gave her the means of retreat, for, once they were finished, she again looked at the girl with a smile that had a world of sunshine in it, and said:

"My dear, I find I was misled by appearances last night, and that I spoke far too harshly. Mr. Murchison writes in a way that proves him to be a gentleman."

"And what answer shall I make him, aunty?" cried the girl, joyfully.

But he asked if he might call."

—Wanted—A Chaperon.

Mrs. Travers hesitated.

"Write him your thanks, child; nothing more."

"But he asks if he may call," Lydia reminded her aunt, shyly but anxiously.

"Yes, my dear; but you need n't say anything about that — because I shall send him a letter by the same messenger, asking him to eat his Christmas dinner with us, so that we may thank him for all he did for you."

AND to this day Allan Murchison often speaks of his wife as "My Christmas Present."

Bon Noel

Love Finds the Way

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LOVE FINDS THE WAY

LOVE FINDS THE WAY

"I WANT you all to look at that picture closely, and though the flicker of the firelight makes it difficult to see, I think you can detect a curious roughness about the outline of the figure, much as if the cobbler-artist who painted it, finding his technique insufficient to make it project itself from the background, had endeavoured to obtain such an effect by actual layers of paint. Look at the right shoulder, above the epaulette, and you will perceive what

I mean. See how lumpily the paint is laid on?"

"I can't say that I see anything unusual," remarked some one.

"Then the light comes wrong for you. I'm sure that some of you sit so that you can see to what I refer?"

"Yes, yes, it's very noticeable," acceded a girl to whom the appeal was made.

"As it will be to you all, when I tell you its real nature. Imagine that once that figure was cut from the surrounding canvas by a knife, and that later, when it was restored, the injury was painted out, as well as could be, but inevitably with a thickening of the paint at that point almost into ridges."

"Yes. I see now what you mean," assented a listener.

"Certainly. It's as plain as can be," agreed a second one.

"Well, my story has to do with that particular fact, and I am going to leave it to each of you to decide whether the picture was the evil genius or the guardian angel of the gentleman it represents. It was painted by an unknown artist in New York during the summer of 1776, and was intended to depict one Lieutenant Richard Goddard, whose regiment formed part of the forces with which Washington was holding the city. Why he chose the particular moment of war's alarms to have himself painted, I cannot say, but there are two horns to the

dilemma, and you are welcome to either, or both. The first explanation is that he had but just received his commission, and doubtless was so proud of his new uniform that the temptation to have a counterfeit presentment of himself made was irresistible. The second is that between guard duty and intrenching he found time, or, perhaps, as better befitted his calling, killed it, by becoming deeply enamoured with his cousin, Phillis Goelet, and it may have been that it was painted at her behest, or, at least, in the hope that it would find a favour in her eyes, which, if family tradition is to be trusted, the original was slow to achieve. We know for certain that the actual sittings took place at Fairview, her father's home,

overlooking the East River, and about two miles from New York — that is, from Wall Street — though the city then straggled almost a mile farther north. The Captain had been asked by his kinspeople to make his home with them, and he and, I suspect, all the other young officers were with them as much as their military duties allowed; and here on the lawn the portrait was limned, with the old house as a background. One can picture the scene as he posed and the artist painted, and, to judge from his expression, Miss Phillis is either saying something teasing to him, or else some one of the officers is uttering some piece of gallantry to her. Or do you think it was merely too early in the season for melons?"

"Harold, how absurd! Grandfather was always very careful what he ate."

"At seventy-nine, yes, but that was because he had n't been at twenty-two, cousin. A man who does n't learn the lesson of green melons at twenty will surely do so at seventy. However, we 'll say that he left the melon patch well alone, probably because the rank and file had already stripped it bare, and that the expression is due to Miss Phillis's coquetting with —"

"Harold, you ought to be ashamed to say such things. From the way you talk, every one will think her a flirt."

"Did n't you tell me that she had sixteen proposals of marriage, not counting nibbles?"

"Yes. And it's true, for Mamma told me."

"And what would you call a modern girl who had sixteen offers?"

"Oh, but that's different, Harold. That would be horribly vulgar, of course, but all the girls of that time had lots of proposals. It was the way things were then."

"Then why make boast of it in her case?"

"Why, you see—Pshaw! I don't boast of it, Harold; I only tell of it to prove how beautiful and attractive she was."

"Just as every girl of that generation was, if you'll believe their descendants. But how about the men?"

"Men? What do you mean?" demanded Mrs. Goddard.

"Why, if every girl had a baker's dozen or so of lovers, what an awful disgrace rests on our grandfathers."

"I don't understand what you mean, Harold."

"That each one was in love a dozen times before he could get a girl to have him. They must have been awful chumps. Really, Lieutenant Dick, I don't wonder that you have the woe-begone look to your mouth, which a moment ago I ascribed to melons. Think of being rejected that often! No wonder they were six and eight bottle men; nothing short of a hogshead would do for me under such a series of disappoint-

ments. Their hearts must have looked as if they had been through a stone-breaker set to make top-dressing for macadam roads."

"Harold, you are perfectly unbearable. She was his first and only love."

"Then I suppose eleven other girls were short one proposal each, by his being so ungallant, as well as unfashionable. How the dear creatures must have hated him."

"Nothing of the kind. Mamma assured me he was a great beau."

"Possibly because they liked a variation from the other kind. I should think that what we may term the 'rapid-fire' lovers of that time must have been rather a nuisance. As they usually

married before they were much over twenty, they must have proposed at least three or four times a year. Probably once at each solstice and equinox."

"If you don't stop being silly, and tell your story, I'll begin one in your stead."

"Excuse me, all, for the discursiveness. To resume, Captain Dick sat for his portrait and courted Miss Phillis until early in August, when his regiment was ordered to Brooklyn. There he shared in the drubbing the Continental army got, but, fortunately, having, as you will see by the portrait, a good pair of legs, he was not taken prisoner, and, having successfully run away, he 'lived to fight another day.'"

"He was promoted for his conduct, and you know it, Harold."

"Only because his superior officer could n't run fast enough and so was captured. Clearly a company without a captain would n't do, and so Dick was given his colours. Well. Here he was back again, and once more vainly sighing at the pretty feet of Miss Phillis, none the better, I presume, in her eyes, because of his masterly retreat. He was not permitted to sigh for long, however, for the British effected a landing on Manhattan, and once more good legs were at a premium. It is needless to relate the part he bore in the retreat, first to the north end of the island, and then to White Plains, the one fact of importance to our

tale being that he left behind him at Fairview not merely the girl of his heart, but the portrait, a full-length canvas not being exactly equipage for a soldier in an active campaign. It is to be hoped that he paid the poor artist — that is, sign painter — before departing."

"It's horrid for you to say such things, Harold, and I don't see how you can do it. I'm sure he paid for it."

"Then he unquestionably did, though I have known the masculine two and twenty sometimes a trifle neglectful of such little forms and conventions. And now that one thinks of it, may not that droop to the mouth be due to his worrying over where on earth he was to get the money to pay for the likeness?

Passing that by, however, as irrelevant, here we have Dick himself in Westchester and Dick's portrait at Fairview, both unhung, however deserving thereof the former was in—"

"Harold!"

"You should let me complete my sentence — however deserving thereof the former was in the eyes of King George's cohorts. Well, these same British myrmidons pursued the retreating Continentals into Westchester, intent upon putting an end to resistance, an intention persisted in until they came in sight of the position Washington had occupied. Not liking the look of it, and with a recollection of Bunker's Hill akin to that of the child who has discovered

by contact how a hot stove feels, they took counsel and decided that there was an opportunity for the brave Hessians and Anspachers to cover themselves with undying glory and a foot of top-soil. Accordingly, the German regiments were ordered to assault and carry the American lines, and with alacrity and courage they declined to rob the British grenadiers of such an occasion for achieving fame. As this prudent declaration did not tend to increase the British liking for the task, it was abandoned, and their forces fell back to Manhattan, giving out in explanation that those particular native grapes were sour, and that they never had wanted them any way. It is a story in the family that when one of the British

officers who was quartered at Fairview bitingly remarked that he 'd like to see the face of Captain Goddard, Miss Phillis replied that he might have gratified his wish if he had taken the time to look behind him in the retreat, a retort tending to prove that though her ladyship might not be willing to surrender to Captain Dick herself, she did not propose to see him the butt of any one else. There is a curious distinction between a man's and a woman's love, in that he knows himself to be stricken with the first symptoms of the fever, but she can have the disease for months before she discovers what it is."

"Sort of walking typhoid, eh?" suggested one of the listeners.

"Much worse. Fewer recoveries," muttered the old bachelor.

"Meantime, while Miss Phillis was making the mouths of the British officers alternately water and droop, as once she had made Dick's —"

"Then you acknowledge that he did pay the poor artist," demanded the hostess, triumphantly.

"Is it kind to call the painter that, cousin? Remember he is dead."

"You know perfectly well that I did n't mean any criticism on the quality of his work."

"Then you must have meant that he was poor in a worldly sense; ergo, it is clear that Grandfather Richard had not paid him?" questioned the narrator.

"Do finish your story, Harold," was her only retort.

"I should have long since, but for interruptions. Howe and his forces having done their share of retreating, it became a question in the Continental camp whether the British were going into winter quarters at New York, or whether they were planning a descent into New Jersey. Accurate knowledge on this point was of enormous importance, and the little that was obtainable was of the most conflicting nature. Under these circumstances Captain Dick offered to go into the city to see if he could not get the needed information, and his proposition was eagerly accepted. The American cause still had friends in

the town who could aid in the quest, three of whom were named to the young volunteer, and as the British could scarcely guard the whole water front of the city, it did not appear a difficult task to effect a landing and a communication with them.

"As time was everything, Dick secured the garb of a farmer, and rode some twelve miles that afternoon to Morrisania. One of the family after whom that place was named, being in camp, had recommended to the Captain a boatman who could be relied upon, and, as soon as the darkness permitted, they rowed out of the Harlem into the East River, and pulled for New York, expecting to reach it some time before midnight. To their

disappointment, they soon discovered that a number of British frigates and patrol boats were in the river, forcing them to proceed with the utmost caution, and thus long before their destination was reached, the tide turned, which meant more delay. Upon this the boatman refused to go farther, fearing that he could not make good his own return before daylight, and gave his companion the choice of either being landed where they were, or of returning with him. It is needless to say which alternative he took, and, accordingly, a little after three o'clock the Captain found himself on the shores of Manhattan, with but little farther knowledge as to his whereabouts.

"Fortunately, the barking of a dog

gave him a little guidance, and by this clue he groped his way through a field or two, until at last he came upon a farm house, to which, because of the dog and the unknown sympathies of its occupants, he gave a wide berth, but by its means was quickly upon the King's Bridge road, and therefore upon familiar ground. Turning southward upon it, he took as rapid a pace as he dared, for, not knowing where an outpost might be placed, some prudence was necessary. The wisdom of his precaution was soon shown by his coming in sight of a picket fire at the junction with the Middle Road. Frequent strolls during the previous summer with — let us say, his fellow officers — had made all this well known

country to him, and he turned off into a lane, and then into one branching from it, which brought him, just as the sky was beginning to redden, behind the barn of Fairview."

"Oh, ho!" exclaimed one of the masculine listeners.

"That's what I've been hoping he'd do," eagerly cried a feminine one.

"Proceeding cautiously, he stole around the barn, and, wishing to make sure of the place of quick retreat before venturing to the house, he softly rolled back one of the barn doors until there was space enough for him to enter. What the growing light revealed to him led to a hasty retreat, for on piles of hay spread on the floor lay three red-coated troopers,

and even as he drew back one of them suddenly sat up, and looked about to see what had disturbed him. A large chestnut tree stood within a few feet of the barn, and Dick jumped quietly behind it, not a moment too soon, for the cavalryman appeared at the door and looked out, while he tried to rub the sleep from his eyes. Seeing nothing, and too stupid still to draw any inference from the change in the door, he muttered a curse, and went back to his hay. Waiting a little for safety, the Captain left his concealment, and keeping out of the range of the crack, and using every bit of cover that he could, he sneaked his way to the house. It was now almost daylight and every moment was making his situation

more perilous. Hoping to gain aid from within, and knowing that the servants would be first stirring, he went to the kitchen, and peeped in at one of the windows. Here, again, he was doomed to disappointment, for he could see by the light of the mouldering logs in the fireplace more sleeping figures stretched on the floor.

"Oftentimes our luckiest actions are forced upon us, and so it proved in this case. While Goddard momentarily debated what it was best to do, the sound of the barn doors being rolled open attracted his attention, and there issued forth one of the troopers, leading a horse. He was followed by a second and then a third one, each with a horse, and then

all took their way to the watering trough, which was in plain view of the house. Our Captain at the first warning had placed himself behind the vines growing about the kitchen porch, this being the only cover at hand, and here he stood, though wishing that he had sought concealment in the orchards or elsewhere, and trusting that they would presently return to the barn and give him a chance to escape. Even this hope was quickly killed, for, as the horses drank, one of the men put a bugle to his lips and there came across the lawn the notes to which soldiers have put the words:

'I can't get 'em up,
I can't get 'em up,
I can't get 'em up in the morning.

I can't get 'em up,
I can't get 'em up,
I can't get 'em up at all.'

"As if echoing a disproof, the Captain heard sounds which indicated that those within were stirring, and he knew that the protecting vines, which the autumn frosts had almost stripped of their leaves, would be no concealment from any one coming on to the porch. For an instant he balanced either a run for it or boldly joining the men at the trough; then as the best, he put his foot on the lattice and as quickly as he could climbed to the roof of the porch. Here, by lying down, he could almost conceal himself from view. This he effected, and none too soon, for barely was he placed, when

he heard the kitchen door open, and footsteps below him, sounds which turned the eyes of those at the trough towards the house, and, as he could see them plainly, he realised that if their attention was not fixed on their fellow troopers, a little lifting of their eyes would reveal him to them. Fortunately for him, the two groups began to gird at each other, as those below left the porch and walked toward their fellows. The newcomers after a moment's pause with their fellows continued on to the barn, evidently to get their own chargers, and those at the trough faced about to continue the vocal sparring.

"It was the Captain's one chance, and, getting on his knees, he tried the

window, which, to his relief, he found was unfastened. Not losing an instant, he raised it enough to gain entrance, and crawled in. Turning, he closed the window, at the same time looking to see if the dragoons had discovered him, and he breathed easier when he saw them still intent on their various occupations.

"Safe for the time being, or at least out of his worst peril, Captain Dick turned about. A big four-post bedstead, with the curtains still buttoned together, warned him that the bed was probably still occupied, and two pairs of heavy riding boots on the floor, and sundry parts of uniforms thrown on chairs, only served to assure him that he had but

changed, and not escaped the dangers that beset him.

"'Is that you, McCoy?' asked a sleepy voice from behind the curtains.

"Close to the window by which he had entered was a door, and, as his one chance, Dick softly opened it and slipped through, to find himself in a closet redolent of lavender.

"'Is that you, McCoy?' again demanded the voice.

"'What the deuce is the row?' asked a second voice, crossly.

"'I thought I heard some one in the room, man.'

"'It was your own infernal snoring, I'll be bound. Devil seize me, what a sweet thing life would be if

there was no going to bed and no getting up.'

"Well. More grumbling followed, and the two finally set on to dressing, no detail of which is worth mention save the circumstance that in pulling on his boots one of the officers, by ill luck, chose to lean against the closet door, which promptly closed tight, and latched itself. At the moment Captain Dick gave the tell-tale click no thought, but when the men finally left the room, and he ran his hand up and down the door, to find only a smooth surface, he realised that by that small accident he had been made a prisoner. It is true that probably he could, by bracing himself, force the latch, but on consideration he preferred

not to risk the noise of it, preferring to wait the coming of one of the servants, knowing for certain that he could trust any of them to release him quietly, and to aid him in every possible way. So like a philosopher he settled himself on the floor in the most restful attitude he could compass, and waited.

"It seemed to him ages elapsed before any one entered the room, and, when at last some one did, it brought only disappointment to the prisoner, for the heavy stride bespoke a man. He was followed presently by one of the maids, and the poor Captain was forced to listen to a half-bantering, half-gallant conversation as one made the beds and tidied the room and the other polished the

swords and buckles; and apparently this semi-flirtation greatly lengthened the dual tasks. Finally the maid completed her duties and departed to another room, and then all the sounds that came to the hungry, sleepy, and tired man was the faint rubbing of brushes or chamois.

"Suddenly he sat up from his recumbent position against the wall, with a consciousness that he had been asleep, but for how long he had not the slightest idea. For a moment he was too dazed to remember his whereabouts, but in a flash it came back, and he listened.

"'Capotted, by George,' he heard a man say.

"'Damn the luck,' muttered another,

and then followed the clink of coins. 'For heaven's sake, man, do deal faster.'

"A pause ensued, and then:

"'Seven in suit.'

"'Good.'

"'And a sixieme.'

"'Good, curse it.'

"'And three aces.'

"'Not good.'

"'Seven and sixteen are twenty-three, and nine cards and a card played are thirty-three — Forty-three I score, and — Hallo! What brings you, Howgate?'

"'Orders from headquarters,' replied a new voice. 'The regiment is to muster to-morrow morning before daylight.'

"'What's in the wind?'

"'Headquarters don't tell, but as

similar orders have been issued to seven other regiments, and as we are to embark our horses, 't is evident the Jerseys are to be invaded.'

"'Ten guineas that we eat our Christmas dinner in Philadelphia,' offered one of the card players.

"'If we don't meet with a second White Plains.'

"''T is on that very fact I base my offer. With Washington in Westchester we can be well across the Delaware before he so much as knows we 've started.'

"As can be imagined, this was news to the Captain, which set him to alternately blessing his stars — that he should have been in a position to hear it — and to cursing them — that that same posi-

tion allowed him to put his knowledge to such little use. After some more talk, needless here to repeat, the officer who had brought the order departed, and the two resumed their card playing, to the disgust of the prisoner, who fretted and fumed as he was forced to listen to the monotonous declarations and countings, varied only by the chink of coin or the exclamation of joy or anger at some particular piece of luck, either good or bad. Having no idea how long he had slept, he could form no conclusion as to the probable time, save by the fact that the air of the closet was becoming well-nigh insupportable. Yet there was nothing to do but submit to the enforced imprisonment and suffocating atmosphere,

for a discovery was certain but to make the former more serious, and probably only terminated by a suffocation absolutely fatal.

"At last a bell, which the Captain recognised as that rung for meals, sounded, putting a finish to the cards and drawing the players downstairs. Ere the tramp of their boots had sounded through the lower hall, Goddard had his back braced against the wall, and one foot on the door, but then faltered and waited, for he knew that he could not force his way out without noise, so he concluded to let them get well started in their eating and drinking before he made the attempt, knowing full well that few things are so engrossing to human kind.

"To make sure that his own eagerness should not get the better of his prudence, he slowly counted two hundred, then braced himself and pushed on the door, slowly increasing the pressure. One foot proving unequal to the purpose, he added the second one. This proved too much for the stout ash, and, though the heavy latch and hinges held firm, the whole centre of the door, both cross and panels, suddenly gave way with a crash, which to Dick sounded as if the whole house were coming down about his ears.

"As the wood caved outward, the Captain went to the floor none too lightly. Without stopping to pick himself up, he crawled through the outlet. In the closet he had planned out exactly

what course to pursue. If a glance out of the window showed him a clear field, he intended to descend as he had come, and to trust to the fleetness of his legs and the nearness of the orchards and woods in making a run for it; but if he saw that the dragoons still blocked that road to liberty, then he hoped to conceal, but not imprison himself in one of the adjoining rooms, and to bide a chance for actual escape, either with or without the aid of his relations.

"In these carefully thought out plans, the Captain had failed to take one possibility into account, and so he was very much taken back to find that he had crawled into an absolutely dark room, and that out of doors was equally dark.

He had slept during the noon-tide meal and that now being discussed was supper.

"Few minds act to advantage when suddenly surprised, and that of the Captain led him to do what was probably the poorest thing he could do. Quite ignoring the fact that if the darkness would conceal him, it would also conceal whatever danger there might be, he carried out his first intention, and raising the window, he stepped out on the roof of the porch. He had barely done so when he became conscious of men's voices below him, and he realised that an unknown number of people were standing or sitting on the porch. Barely was he assured of this, when his ears

were greeted with the demand from below:

"'Hello! Who's above there?'

"As quietly as was possible with quickness, Dick stepped back through the window, and went groping his way across the room. He had lost precious time, however, for as he put his hand on the latch of the door, he heard steps outside in the hall. None the less he opened it just enough to look out. What first caught his eye was the flickering light of a candle, carried by one of the negro servants of his uncle, but its light also served to reveal the unwelcome presence of two troopers, one standing at the head of the stairs, and the second close behind the negress.

"'What is it, Boggs?' enquired some one on the floor below.

"'Devil burn me, if I know what it was, Captain,' one of the men replied, 'but it sounded for all the world like a twelve-pound shot tearing its way through a partition.'

"'Never mind what it sounded like. Look about and see what 't was.'

"'Very good, sir.'

"'Oh, Massa Soldier, you don't tink it was no sperit?' questioned the negress, while she glanced about apprehensively.

"''T was a mighty solid one, if it was,' laughed the dragoon. 'We 'll look in here first,' he suggested, making a motion toward the door of a room

opposite the one in which they stood. 'Give me the candle.'

"'For the lub of Heaben, don't take de light away. Dey say de debil dun fly off with folks sometimes,' whimpered the woman.

"'Nonsense!' growled the man, and catching the candle from her hand, he disappeared through the doorway, leaving the hall in almost total darkness.

"It was the condition for which Goddard had been hoping, and he stole through the doorway and on tip-toe groped his way towards the stairs, intending to take the soldier who stood at its head by surprise, and then to make a dash for it. Unfortunately, the negress, in terror of the darkness, was seeking to

escape from the upper hall, and so the two came into violent collision. This drew from her a series of ear-splitting shrieks, and a clutch at the Captain's arm so desperate that it took all his strength to free himself. Just as he broke loose from it, the hall was lighted up by the return of the trooper, with the candle, from the bedroom, which revealed the dragoon still standing at the head of the stairs.

"'We have him,' he called, and the second shouted, 'Here's the thief.'

"Quick as a flash the Captain sprang back towards the man with the light, and with a sweep of his arm sent the candlestick flying from his hand; this done, he dodged sideways as far as the wall would

let him, and then pressing as flat against it as he could, he edged along it till he reached the end of the baluster. Guided by this, he moved rapidly to the head of the stairs, where he was forced to halt a moment to find out the position of the trooper.

"He who had held the candle was expressing his opinion in unmeasured Anglo-Saxon, and warning his companion to look sharp.

"'Look sharp!' replied the soldier, so near the fugitive that it made him jump. 'Nice advice after you letting the rogue—'

"There Goddard's fist, full in the face, cut short the speech, and sent the fellow rolling downstairs; and his assailant

followed almost as rapidly. Before the bottom was reached candles lighted the lower hall, and Dick saw that if he continued it would only be to rush into the arms of three officers. Turning, with the intention of retracing his steps, he found the soldier awaiting him above. One glance showed him the cause was up, and with coolness and good sense he calmly sat down on a step.

"'What is it? What is it?' Phillis's voice asked, and at the same instant she and her father appeared beside the officers.

"His moment to collect himself served the Captain in good stead, for he had gathered his wits together, and now, before either of his relatives had so much as seen, much more recognized him, he

said, 'Oh, please, sir, Squire Goelet, things look agin me, but I swow I did n't come to thieve, but only to ask a favour of you, an' as you wuz at supper, Fanny told me to go right up and get what I wanted, and I hope, sir, that I did n't do wrong, sir, and that if I did, you 'll forgive me, for really, Squire, I did n't intend no offence.' Goddard purposely kept on talking, first to cover the very natural exclamations of surprise which both Mr. Goelet and his daughter uttered at hearing his voice, and then to give them time to recover themselves. And as he spoke, he rose and slowly descended the stairs. 'Don't you know me — Josh Riley — Squire?' he ended, as he reached the bottom of the flight.

"'Whoever you are,' growled the soldier, holding his jaw with one hand and feeling his shoulder with the other, 'What do you mean by —'

"'Silence!' ordered one of the officers. 'Do you know this fellow?' he asked of Mr. Goelet.

"'Yes, yes,' broke in Phillis, with her hand on her father's arm. 'It 's just as he says. He 's Josh Riley.'

"'And what were you doing upstairs?' demanded the officer.

"'I own it wuz n't with permission,' said Dick, with a cringing manner, 'but findin' the Squire wuz at supper, I put it to Fanny if I should disturb him, and she said to go right up.'

"'What for?' persisted the questioner.

"'Why for the medicine, Kunel,' explained Dick, finding an explanation just as he needed it.

"'And did you get it, Joshua?' asked Phillis.

"'No, Miss Phillis. It wuz dark, an' I went kerplump into suthin, and made such a tarnel racket I thought the house wuz comin' down. An' then I heard folks a comin', an' thought I'd made too free perhaps, and so I tried to sneak out, and then I ran into Dinah, and she set up sech a screechin' that I clean went off my head, and in tryin' to get away I knocked the light out of the snoger's hand and hit this one a clip in the jaw. 'Deed, I'm sorry, Squire, and Mr. Officers, and I hope you won't hold it up agin me.'

"'Of course, you won't, will you, Father!' remarked Phillis.

"'Why, certainly not, Joshua. Come with me, and ye shall drink a glass of Madeira, and then ye shall have any medicine I can give ye.'

"A general move to the dining room followed, Dick fairly hugging himself over the success of his finesse. Once there, as the officers resumed their seats, the host filled a glass from the decanter, and presented it to Goddard.

"'I'll get the medicine while you drink,' offered Phillis. 'I hope your little brother is n't any worse?'

"'Thank 'ee, Miss, and may you be rewarded as you deserve. He 's about the same.'

"While they were exchanging these remarks, one of the officers rose, and went to the hall door. From that coign of vantage he said: 'I believe I am not mistaken in thinking we are honoured with the presence of Captain Goddard.'

"'What the deuce do you mean?' demanded a fellow officer.

"'If you 'll compare the portrait in the next room with Mr. Joshua Riley, I don't think you 'll remain in doubt.'

"'What? Ho! A good matching of the cards, Lieutenant.'

"Goddard drew a long breath. 'Well, gentlemen,' he said, 'as you will have me an officer, pray treat me as one. I have not tasted food or drink since yesterday at four. May I satisfy nature a

little, now that the game is up? I pledge you my word to make no attempt to escape while I eat.'

"'Aye, sit down, man, and eat your fill,' cried the commander, 'and sorry I am for you.'

"Dick turned and took Miss Phillis's hand and kissed it. 'I'm glad that you are at the end of it,' he said.

"'What end?' enquired the girl, innocently.

"'Of my capture,' replied Dick, with a slight choke. Then he took his seat, only to find that the thirst and hunger which had so tormented him in the closet were things of the past. He tried to eat, but each mouthful nearly strangled him.

"A strange quiet, full of significance, had come over every one, finally broken by Mr. Goelet whispering a couple of questions to the man on his right.

"'Nothing,' the latter said aloud, after a shake of the head.

"'Not even Sir William?'

"'No. It's too plain a case.'

"'Case of what?' asked Phillis, suspiciously.

"'Nothing, my dear,' replied her father, gently, but she saw the tears in his eyes.

"'Father, what is it?' she cried. 'Dick, you will tell me,' she appealed.

"Twice the Captain tried to speak, and twice he failed; finally he turned to Mr. Goelet. 'For God's sake, uncle, tell her,' he begged.

"'Come with me, Phillis,' said her father, rising and going to the door which opened into the parlour.

"As Phillis was about to follow, she halted, and spoke, 'You will not take my cousin away to prison before I return, will you, Major Sutherland?'

"'Certainly not, Miss Goelet. I'll promise that you have speech with him before sending him to the Provost.'

"After the two were gone, the Major whispered some orders to one of the officers, and he, too, left the room. Before long he returned with two troopers and reported that horses were saddled and an escort waiting.

"That is all, Lieutenant. I shall ride to the Provost myself, and then report

the capture to Sir William. Will you tell Miss Goelet that we must be moving?'

"Even as he spoke, Mr. Goelet re-entered the room, and the Major repeated his request to him.

"'My daughter, sir, is naturally very much upset by the terrible news I was compelled to break to her, and she begs you to give her a few moments to recover herself. Surely five minutes is little to ask for in such a matter?'

"'True, Mr. Goelet, and I would I might grant more than that. Tell her that her wish is a command to me.'

"Once more Mr. Goelet returned to the parlour, and once more the men in the dining room relapsed into moody silence. It was a woman's — that is, a

long — five minutes they had to wait, but at last, the girl, looking very white, but also contained, opened the door of the parlour. She came no farther, but from that point she said,

"'Major Sutherland, I have one more request to make, and one that I implore you to grant.'

"'But name it, Miss Goelet.'

"'There was more between my cousin Richard and myself than the world had knowledge of, and I pray of you that we may say a farewell to each other in this room, out of hearing of all but ourselves.'

"'It is granted,' assented the commander, 'but I must first place a man outside the window and door that —'

"''Tis needless, sir, for we will not

close the door, and will stand in clear sight during the whole interview,' cried Phillis. 'Oh, sir, do not prolong my misery.'

"'Forgive me, but I must take precautions, Miss Goelet. However, this will do, if you go not out of our observation,' he added, as, entering the parlour, he bolted the window, and locking the door into the hall, put the key into his pocket. Leaving her, he returned to the dining room, and said to Dick, 'You must take your farewell now, sir,' and then took a place at the table from which he could watch the girl, who was now standing beside the mantel.

"The Captain bowed his thanks, too deeply moved to speak, and went to his

love. The Major saw him take her hand, and so they stood for a moment; then the girl's head dropped on Dick's shoulder, and he put his arms about her. Ashamed to watch, the Major raised his glass and, as he drank, looked at the ceiling. When his head and eyes resumed their normal position, he saw that the only change that had taken place in their position was that now Miss Goelet's back was turned to him, though her head still lay on Goddard's shoulder. With an imprecation on the duties of soldiering, the officer reached out and refilled his glass from the decanter.

"An ear-rending scream from the kitchen, followed by loud voices, broke

on the quiet, and there appeared in the doorway one of the negro servants.

"'Massa Goelet, woon youse tell dese wuthless dragoons ter behave? Massa Officer, dey jes drive poor Dinah mos 'stracted.'

"'What's the matter?' questioned Sutherland.

"'Mattah? Deyse jis all over everything — Deyse —'

"'Look to it, Lieutenant,' ordered the Major, 'and see that the men behave themselves.' Suddenly realizing that he was looking towards the kitchen, he turned and glanced into the parlour, to find the lovers still standing as they had been before the interruption. Coming back to his first intention, he drank off

his wine, and setting the glass down rose as he did so. 'I don't wish to be cruel, Captain Goddard,' he said, 'but time presses, and —'

"'Just a minute more,' broke in Phillis's voice, and the Major settled back into his seat, and once again filled and slowly emptied his glass.

"'I'll have up another bottle, Major,' suggested Mr. Goelet.

"'Not for me, thank you, for I must be in the saddle and attending to this wretched business,' replied the officer as he pushed his chair back, and walked to the parlour doorway. 'I must ask you to come now, Captain,' he said.

"The pair remained motionless, and again Sutherland started to repeat his

request. Before it was half uttered, he sprang forward, only to find Phillis with her arms about the picture of the Captain, which had been hastily cut from its frame, while the open window, hitherto concealed from him by the chimney breast, told an equally plain story. The whole thing had been planned out before her return to the dining room, the picture cut from its background with a knife, rolled up and put on the mantel, and Dinah instructed to create the diversion she so successfully did, during which, of course, Master Dick was whisked behind the chimney breast where he could unbolt and raise the window, while Miss Phillis raised his canvas simulation to her heart. And so

now you have the story of those humpy lines in the portrait, and my only wonder is that they don't show more."

"And did he escape?" asked some one of the house party.

"'Did he escape?' What a question to ask! Do you suppose he could be recaptured after all that? No, he safely reached Washington's camp with his information, of course. The Continental army was shifted at once to New Jersey, held the British in check as long as it could, and finally, at Trenton and Princeton, saved our nation."

"And did Phillis and he marry?" asked a feminine listener.

"Of course, again! Don't you know that her saving him in that way, accord-

ing to all the rules of romance, was the next thing to a clergyman and a ring?"

"How delightful to have a portrait with such a history!" sighed a sentimental maiden of nameless years. "I should think you'd be so proud of your ancestor, Mrs. Goddard."

"I always have been," acceded the hostess.

"And from to-night I think my cousin will be prouder than ever, I predict," asserted the story teller, "because much of this was new to her, and I think she ought to thank me for grubbing it out of musty old papers."

"But I say," remarked one of the older men, "that English major was five kinds of a fool, it seems to me."

"I think he was fairly typical of the British officer," agreed the story teller.

"And do you mean to say that he could mistake the portrait for the prisoner, with the one in full uniform and three-cornered hat, and the other in farmer's clothes, and I presume, from what he had gone through, bareheaded?" demanded an objector.

"You are one of the fellows whom it is impossible to please," protested Mr. Goddard. "I've told you the story; now why do you want to pick holes in it?"

"But it's impossible to believe that he—"

"Oh, dear, here's another one. You wanted a story, and I've done my best.

If you had asked for history, I'd have taken down one of the reports of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, over there, and read aloud to you a series of documents. But that isn't what you, or the public want, and you know it. An ox team couldn't drag either of you to spend an hour on such a book. 'Tell us a story,' you beg, 'in which the daring hero gets idiotically into the most desperate of dangers, and just as everything is lost, let the brave and beautiful heroine save him by some wonderful device, and let him save the country, and when the dove of peace appears with the olive branch, which but for these twain would never have been, let them be married, under the stars and stripes, and roses."

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